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EXHIBIT

DATE 1-29-69

HB 2 - Child
Family

Family Concepts, Sunburst Foundation
Andrea J. Brown, Hamilton, Montana

Hello. I want to thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Andrea Brown; I am a family support worker for Family Concepts, a part of the Sunburst Foundation. I work in Ravalli County, with families involved with Child and Family Services. One father that I work with is 23 years old; a Methamphetamine addict. His two children are now 2 and 4 years old. At the time these children were taken into care, they were placed in foster care because there were no kinship placements available because every member of both the father's and mother's family had felony convictions involving violence, drugs and alcohol. So this Dad had learned to survive -- and to parent under these conditions.

He has told me that having his children removed was the worst thing that has ever happened to him, but he has also told me that he has never felt more supported than he does at this time in his life. He now has a solid six months of sobriety, more than at any time since he was twelve. Although he has not yet completed high school, he has now completed parenting classes and chemical dependency classes. He has maintained a home and held a job for several months now, and maintained a relationship with his children as he works on his treatment plan. His children are thriving in foster care, supported by a caring family. He is working, paying taxes, and excited about the future in a way he was never able to be before, and making plans to parent his children full time.

I was recently supervising a final visit with another family before they were reunified and I was telling them the things I had learned while working with them. The mother was inspired to tell me that what she had learned from me is that **family matters. Family matters.** For her to get to that realization now, as an adult with two teenage children, is an amazing thing. Her daughter told me that what she has learned from me is to stand up for herself in a nice way, in a way that encourages other people to listen. This is a powerful thing for any teenager to learn, but especially one who is more used to getting -- and taking -- negative attention, even if it does not achieve the things that she really wants. This experience will change her whole life.

Your support of Child and Family Services, Western Montana Addictions, Western Montana Mental Health, Foster Care and Reunification Services provided by Sunburst helps to give families like these hope for new futures and skills to guide them to success. Our population is growing, and your support is needed more than ever. Thank you very much for your careful consideration of the needs of our children.